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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Upcoming Visit of PM Olmert to Washington
- [1](#)2. Iran

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Key stories in the media:  
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In its lead story, Ha'aretz reported that on Thursday, the US published a draft of a new international treaty that would forbid the production of fissionable materials for use in nuclear weapons, overriding Israel's objections to the proposed document. The draft, which was presented to the UN Disarmament Commission in Geneva, aims to "freeze" existing stocks of fissionable materials worldwide in order to keep them from expanding. Although Washington sent messages to Israel assuring it that it has nothing to fear from the treaty, Jerusalem is worried by any move that might erode its policy of nuclear ambiguity and generate future pressure on it over its nuclear program. As a result, Israel made a last-minute effort to persuade the U.S. not to submit the draft for discussion. Ha'aretz wrote that Washington has also rejected Israel's request for an upgrade in its civilian nuclear status. The newspaper reported that Israel was hoping that it could cut a deal similar to the agreement the US signed with India. However, Ha'aretz said that the US administration asked Prime Minister Ehud Olmert not to raise this issue during his visit to Washington next week because the issue requires thorough study by administration professionals first.

Maariv reported that the GOI is conducting informal talks with the Palestinians in order to reach an understanding with PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas bypassing Hamas. The newspaper wrote that Justice Minister Haim Ramon and top Abbas aide Saeb Erekat are involved in the contacts. Maariv also reported that talks took place in Europe. Yediot reported that Abbas, FM Tzipi Livni, and Vice PM Shimon Peres will meet in Sharm el-Sheikh on Sunday. Ha'aretz printed an AP story quoting EU officials as saying Thursday that the EU is hoping that the US will persuade Israel, during Olmert's visit to Washington next week, to resume peace talks with the Palestinians instead of conducting a unilateral pullout from the West Bank. The Jerusalem Post quoted Olmert as saying this week in a private conversation that his convergence plan will involve the removal of fewer than 70,000 settlers, the figure most widely quoted in the media.

Israel Radio and other media quoted Olmert as denying in an interview with The New York Times that there was any Palestinian "humanitarian crisis," and that he was prepared to buy medical supplies for the Palestinians with USD 50 million in tax revenue that Israel is withholding. Olmert told The New York Times that Israel "will pay if necessary out of [its] own pockets." Yediot quoted Olmert as saying in the interview that he thanks God for America and President Bush every morning.

Leading media reported that an Israeli couple was wounded last night in a probable ambush near the northern West Bank settlement of Tapuah. Leading media reported that the Karni crossing was closed on Thursday due to terror warnings. Israel Radio reported that 8 Qassam rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip Thursday and that the IDF responded with artillery fire.

Yediot quoted Abbas as saying privately that the Hamas government will soon collapse and that new elections will be held in the PA in three months. Yediot quoted Israeli defense sources as saying that the Palestinian economy is collapsing. Some media said that a state of civil war was already prevailing in the PA. Israel Radio quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as saying Thursday that she hopes that the internal Palestinian situation will calm down and that the US believes that Abbas should be able to exercise his responsibilities.

Maariv reported that on Thursday, FM Livni rebuked Chen Yonglong, the Chinese Ambassador to Israel, over meetings between some of his aides with Hamas members in the territories, which Livni reportedly said might lead to the imposition of restrictions to the freedom of movement of Chinese diplomats in Israel and possibly to their expulsion from Israel. Other media reported on Livni's summons.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the US-backed Iraqi government sent an official representative to this week's meeting of the Arab Boycott Office in Damascus, prompting criticism from members of Congress and the Bush administration. The Jerusalem Post reported that Tom Casey, a spokesman for the State Department, told the newspaper that Washington was unhappy with Baghdad's action and was raising this issue with the Iraqi government. The newspaper reported that according to figures released this week by the Israel Export Institute, there has been a 46 percent rise in Israeli sales to Iraq (valued at USD 320,000), with 27 exporters active in that market primarily with the US military.

Maariv reported that around two weeks ago, a representative of former Greek-Orthodox Patriarch Irineos rented a building in central West Jerusalem to Tanzim member Imad Awad, an Abbas associate, and his men. The newspaper, which said that on Wednesday, the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court issued an order against their presence there, quoted associates of current Greek-Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III as saying that Irineos, who is supported by Israel, is trying to create links with the Palestinians and that that such incidents are due to the fact that Israel is delaying its recognition of Theophilos.

Leading media quoted Samir Geagea, a former head of Christian Phalanges in Lebanon, as saying in an interview that will appear Saturday in the Lebanese daily As-Safir that four Iranians -- three diplomats and a journalist -- missing in Lebanon since 1982 were killed by Phalangist militiamen. Iran had claimed that Israel had either killed or detained the four. Ha'aretz noted that the Iranian claims had been made repeatedly in an effort to justify and explain the lack of willingness of its Lebanese surrogates, Hizbullah, to reveal any information on the fate of the captured Israel air force navigator Ron Arad. Ha'aretz said that Geagea's confirmation is unlikely to have any effect on Iran and Hizbullah regarding Arad.

Leading media quoted former IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon as saying at Haifa University Thursday that the decision-makers in the disengagement process should be investigated. Maariv reported that 31-year-old Israeli draft resistor Dan Tzahor has been lecturing on American campuses on behalf of a Muslim student organization, comparing the IDF to the Nazi army. The newspaper cited a cable sent by Consul for Communication and Public Affairs at Israel's Consulate-General in Los Angeles Gilad Milo, which reported that Tzahor also addressed three US soldiers who refused to serve in Iraq.

Ha'aretz reported that on Thursday, High Court of Justice President Aharon Barak denied having predicted that the court would overturn the Citizenship Law if the Knesset were to extend it again.

The Jerusalem Post cited a study first reported in The New York Sun this week, according to which US citizens who have ties to Israel or an Israeli-American dual citizenship encounter difficulties in obtaining security clearance from the Pentagon and are dealt with

in a manner similar to that of Americans who have ties with hostile nations.

Citing AP, Ha'aretz quoted Israeli and British officials as saying Thursday that Israeli authorities have been detaining Ayez Ali, a British citizen, since May 9, and that they are holding him for questioning on an unspecified security-related matter.

Ha'aretz (Hebrew Ed.) reported that the American Jewish Committee (AJC) pledged this week to help shoulder the potential costs involved in fighting attempts to boycott Israel. The newspaper wrote that the AJC has set aside USD 10,000 to relaunch its anti-boycott fund. The move follows the recent announcement of a planned academic boycott of Israel by the UK's National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education.

Yediot reported that in December 2005, Swiss intelligence thwarted an attempt to blow up an El Al airliner at Geneva Airport.

Yediot disclosed American documents proving that Israel and South Africa conducted a nuclear test off the Antarctic coast in September 1979. The newspaper wrote that then-US President Jimmy Carter whitewashed the affair.

Yediot reported that on Thursday, an Israeli-Palestinian team reached the summit of Mt. Everest.

Yediot displayed the picture of a painting by Israeli artist Zigi Ben-Haim, which was commissioned by NASA. The work depicts the Columbia shuttle disaster.

Israel Radio reported that Yitzhak Ben-Aharon, a veteran Labor Party politician and a leading mentor of Israeli Socialism, died this morning in his kibbutz, Givat Haim Meuhad, aged almost 100. The radio cited eulogies of Ben-Aharon by President Moshe Katsav, PM Olmert, and Vice PM Peres.

Ha'aretz (Hebrew Ed.) reported that this week, the Overseas Vote Foundation, a nonpartisan initiative aimed at increasing participation among American expatriates, released data according to which Israel ranks eighth in the world in the number of overseas US voters who have already registered for the November 2006 elections.

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**1. Upcoming Visit of PM Olmert to Washington:**  
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Summary:  
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Senior columnist Nahum Barnea, at this time a research fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, "addressed" Prime Minister Olmert from Washington in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Mr. Prime Minister.... Weak or strong, George Bush is the only president you have."

Washington correspondent Nathan Guttman wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "The President is now in 'listening mode'.... [However], questions are expected to be raised."

In popular, pluralist Maariv, senior columnist Dan Margalit imagined Prime Minister Olmert's ideal comments to President Bush: "In the absence of international support for [the convergence plan], the number of evacuated settlers might drop to about 20,000."

Defense and foreign affairs columnist Amir Oren wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "[For the United States], the Middle East is the lead region, but within it Israel and its disputes have become secondary."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in Maariv: "Olmert must only leave the White House after Bush understands ... the scope of the [Iranian] threat [to Israel]."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "[The convergence plan] won't be discussed during Olmert's Washington visit, since President Bush has aligned himself with the Europeans' line."

## Block Quotes:

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### I. "Ehud, Fasten Your Seat Belt"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea, at this time a research fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, "addressed" Prime Minister Olmert from Washington in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (5/19): "In two days, Mr. Prime Minister, you will get on the plane on the way to Washington.... Weak or strong, George Bush is the only president you have. In the next two and a half years, during which, as you see it, the convergence plan will either rise or fall, he will be the tenant at the White House. It will, therefore, be only natural, if and when you go out to meet the media, that you will heap compliments on Bush's leadership, on his courage, on his determination. You will say that never before has Israel had such a steadfast friend, so outstanding, in the White House.... [Ariel] Sharon forged an intriguing relationship with Bush. It began with mutual deterrence, continued with suspicion and ultimately became one of sweeping support. The turning point for Bush was the September 11 terror attacks. Sharon was convinced that Bush's next step would be conciliation with the Arab world at Israel's expense. On October 4, 2001, less than a month after the terror attacks, Sharon lashed out against the Bush government with the most serious possible accusation: the Americans had sacrificed Israel just as Chamberlain sacrificed Czechoslovakia. Bush was insulted to the depths of his soul. It is the irony of history that Sharon's mistake was one of the smartest acts of his life. The insult brought him respect: Bush was convinced that Sharon was a real man, and that he would not hesitate to confront the President of the US for the existential interests of his country."

### II. "Capitol Gains"

Washington correspondent Nathan Guttman wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (5/19): "The President is now in 'listening mode' -- ready to hear about Olmert's grand convergence/consolidation/withdrawal plan, yet far from being in a position either to endorse or reject it.... [However], questions are expected to be raised.... Olmert is not expected to have all the answers, though experts agree that in order for the convergence plan to succeed, the Israeli PM will have to be given much more than Sharon got for Gaza -- some international gesture of support and formal recognition, at least from America, of the legality of the new temporary borders he is going to set."

### III. "The Washington Speech"

In popular, pluralist Maariv, senior columnist Dan Margalit imagined Prime Minister Olmert's ideal comments to President Bush (5/19): "Israelis seriously handling ... the convergence plan -- not instead of the Roadmap, but only as a bench warmer. Israel may have to evacuate 40,000 or 50,000 settlers as part of a difficult, painful step accompanied by an intra-Israeli struggle. In the absence of international support for that measure, the number of evacuated settlers might drop to about 20,000. The convergence plan is based on the assumption that we won't have a Palestinian partner for peace, but we will have an international body headed by America to verify that move and back it up."

### IV. "From Convergence to Submergence"

Defense and foreign affairs columnist Amir Oren wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (5/19): "The Bush administration made a serious blunder and allowed Hamas to take part in the elections, on the basis of a complacent supposition that Hamas would not win -- a mistake that has left the Israeli-Palestinian process completely stuck. Until its consequences are overturned -- which will not happen quickly -- Israel is being asked not to be a nuisance.... Israel's place according to the American approach has changed. Until about 15 years ago, the Middle East was a secondary region (with respect to the confrontation with the Soviets, which centered in Europe), but within it the Israeli-Arab conflict played a leading role. Now the Middle East is the lead region, but within it Israel and its disputes have become secondary. Israel's

mission within the framework of the alliance headed by Bush is not to interfere with the main effort."

#### [1V.](#) "The Ahmadinejad Code"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in Maariv (5/19): "Olmert will tell [Bush], 'The Iranian nuclearization is a real existential threat to Israel.' He shouldn't say it publicly. In any case, talk that Israel pushed America into the Iraqi quagmire is growing. But Olmert must only leave the White House after Bush understands ... the scope of the threat."

#### VI. "A Courtesy Visit"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (5/19): "The 'convergence' plan prepared by Prime Minister Olmert is very similar to the withdrawal plan prepared by the State Department in the wake of the Six-Day War.... At this point, it won't be discussed during Olmert's Washington visit, since President Bush has aligned himself with the Europeans' line.... But the warm handshake between Prime Minister Olmert and President Bush is in itself important. We can only congratulate Mr. Olmert with the traditional blessing: 'Go in peace and return in peace.'"

#### [12.](#) Iran:

##### Summary:

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The signs [that the US is on the way to offering the Iranians talks] are accumulating."

##### Block Quotes:

##### "Good-Bye to Pressure"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (5/19): "The signs [that the US is on the way to offering the Iranians talks] are accumulating.... The question of whether there has been a shift with respect to talks with Iran is very important, truly crucial. 'If the Americans start going in the direction of direct dialogue, it could be that this will be the end of the process as we know it, and perhaps with this it will be possible to say goodbye to pressure on Iran,' explained a source in Jerusalem this week. Israelis who are following the developments are identifying innumerable obstacles on the way to such talks, above all the question of whether 'the Iranians want to talk at all.'"

JONES